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The Plot to Kill **CONSUMER PROTECTION**

Bob Marley



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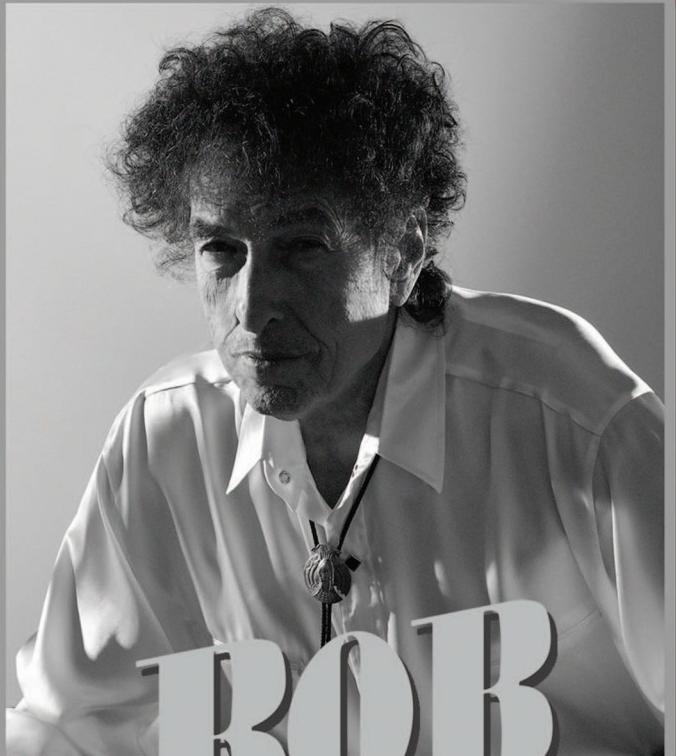


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THE SHORTLIST

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in St. Paul
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TONY NELSON

THE STAT SHEET

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Number of people sent to Minneapolis hospitals two weeks ago due to overdoses on synthetic weed

45

Median age of 21 Minnesota counties, mostly in the western third of the state

46

Percentage of Republicans who favor a preemptive strike against North Korea, presumably believing we can actually win a nuclear war

31

Median age in Minneapolis and St. Paul, explaining the divergent political interests of the Twin Cities and outstate Minnesota

"The biggest adversity this guy probably ever faced was reading small letters on a teleprompter."

Reader Juan Carlos Rodriguez responds to "WCCO's Mike Max: Why can't these Puerto Ricans be more like lowans?" at citypages.com.

COLD HEARTS

WITH CALIFORNIA in flames and Puerto Rico without electricity and water, Minnesota Republican Congressmen Tom Emmer and Jason Lewis voted against the latest round of disaster aid. They officially cited their concerns about the federal deficit.

Unofficially, both are following the GOP tradition of opposing help to brown people and liberals. Texas congressmen did the same when Superstorm Sandy ravaged New Jersey, only to wail for welfare when flooding hit Houston.

The true test of Emmer and Lewis' fiscal bona fides will come when they vote on Trump's tax cut plan, which is expected to add up to \$6 trillion to the public debt.

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LOVE & MONEY

A case seeks to redefine child support between lesbian mothers

Girl meets girl. They fall in love, start living together, and agree to have a child through artificial insemination.

Eventually, things come apart. Their child lives with the biological mother, but spends about a third of each month with the other mother, who has no genetic or legal connection to him.

Bio-mom wants her ex to pony up child support. The ex would rather not, and there's nothing in the law that can make her do it.

This case, filed in Todd County by Sheila Asmus against Lori Hagood, poses the problem of how parenthood is defined in cases of artificial insemination, where a couple legally could not marry at the time the child was conceived.

"Mother always encouraged Partner to assume the status of 'parent' [through adoption] and has at all times agreed to Partner's forming and maintaining an attachment

relationship with the Child," according to Asmus' suit, which claims Hagood did make monthly payments for about two and a half years before stopping in 2015.

Hagood's response was that Asmus made the decision to be a mother long before they lived together, and controls every aspect of her relationship with the child, to the extent that she's never been treated as a real co-parent.

Phil Duran, legal director of the state's foremost LGBT advocacy group, OutFront Minnesota, has kept an eye on the lawsuit because of its implications for other gay families, who are increasingly raising children.

There has been one other case in Minnesota, Johnson v. Soohoo, where a lesbian couple broke up and the non-biological parent fought for parenting time with their child. The state Supreme Court ruled in her favor, reasoning that because the child needed both mothers, and because non-



NATALIA DERIABINA

bio-mom was a de facto parent, biology shouldn't be the only thing that established her rights.

The Asmus-Hagood case is sort of the same thing, Duran says.

"This case is like, 'OK, if the court can give non-bio, non-legal parents rights, can the court then impose obligations?'"

Duran says he has no position on the case for now, but could foresee filing an amicus brief if the case progresses to a higher court. The courts tend to look at these issues from

the standpoint of the child and what the child needs, he believes.

"They're less concerned with adults fighting among each other. Over time, particularly because of the circumstances same-sex couples find themselves in, courts often deal with pragmatic functions of a parent, regardless of legal or biological ties," he says. "From that perspective this doesn't necessarily open up new questions, but I don't know that they've had exactly this collection of facts before them." —SUSAN DU

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The Trans Moment

With Andrea Jenkins and Phillippe Cunningham, Minneapolis is poised to make history

When she was 14, Andrea Jenkins went to a Chicago library and took a book off the shelf, hoping no one would notice what she was reading.

Jenkins tore through the autobiography of Christine Jorgensen, America's first openly transgender celebrity. Jenkins knew she, like Jorgensen, was a girl who'd grown up as a boy. She told no one.

Jenkins worked at being the best guy she could be: a Boy Scout, a football and basketball player, a ladies' man. Based on the few transgender people she'd encountered, coming out meant consigning oneself to a life on the streets, homeless, probably turning tricks or addicted to drugs.

"Who wants to be on the margins?" she asks now. So she hid her identity. "I was excellent at it. I was A-plus."

At the University of Minnesota, Jenkins was outed as bisexual by one of her fraternity brothers. She dropped out and briefly moved back to Chicago before returning to the Twin Cities. She dated "beautiful, prominent women," and eventually married one. They had a daughter together.

These were "good years," but she was living a lie. Jenkins opened up to a therapist and for the first time seriously considered gender reassignment. "It came to a point where it was either live my life openly and authentically—which could mean losing everything—or die."

In her early 30s, she came out. "I lost a lot of friends. My mother said she loved me, but she did not understand." After she transitioned, her life narrowed. She drove to work in human services at Hennepin County, and at day's end stopped at a drive-through to grab dinner before shutting herself in for the night.

"I lived like that for quite some time."

She volunteered with an LGBT youth center, and finally completed the degree she'd abandoned 15 years earlier. She studied community development in grad school at the U of M, and leadership at St. Thomas.

It was there she met Robert Lillgren, who won election to the Minneapolis City Council. Lillgren hired Jenkins as an aide. She later took a job working for Councilwoman Elizabeth Glidden.

In 2014, Jenkins organized a Trans Equity Summit, a rallying event for those left on the margins. One grateful attendee was a young man named Phillippe Cunningham.

Cunningham spent his childhood in rural Illinois as the daughter of an auto worker and a mother who battled addiction and did time in prison. Growing up as a girl, Cunningham envied his father's muscles. He told his mom he wanted to be a man someday. That's not how it works, his mom answered. "That was the end of that conversation for, like, 20 years," Cunningham says.

The thought largely stayed buried until Cunningham was working on a class project at DePaul University, which required he read about pioneering trans activist Lou Sullivan. "I closed the book and I thought, 'Oh, my God, I'm a gay man,'" Cunningham says. "It was like my head exploded."

Cunningham explored this newly exposed truth the same way he did everything else: as a nerd. He studied sociology, sexuality, psychology, and culture. "I needed to learn

why people like me being treated this way was accepted by society."

In 2010, Cunningham came out as transgender. His father, a "stoic" man, said little. "My mom had a harder time with it. Being a mother to a daughter was part of her identity, and she had to mourn that loss."

Cunningham felt he'd sacrificed something too: his chances at professional achievement. Those fears subsided when he moved to Minneapolis, and vanished at Jenkins' equity summit. Cunningham made connections there that helped him get a seat on a city advisory board. Mayor Betsy Hodges later hired him as an aide.

In working for the city, Jenkins and Cunningham got to embrace their inner wonks. They were accepted by their peers, and worked hard to make a difference. They thought this was enough.

Everything changed for Jenkins when Glidden announced she would not seek re-election. Almost overnight, a "Draft Andrea" campaign began. Thousands joined. This past spring, with Glidden's support, Jenkins became the first transgender candidate ever endorsed by the DFL.

For Cunningham, ambition grew out of frustration. He was just an aide, constantly reminded that even if he could get Hodges interested in something, they'd still have to get it past the city council. And that meant Barb Johnson, the council president.

To Cunningham, Johnson represents the status quo—between her and her mother, Alice Rainville, the seat's been in the family since 1975. In 2015, Johnson, whose north Minneapolis district is mostly non-white, was the sole council vote in favor of anti-



Mike Mullen

spitting and "lurking" laws, which were disproportionately used to arrest minorities.

Cunningham gave up his city job to challenge Johnson, a 20-year incumbent. He threw everything into it. At the April convention, he successfully blocked Johnson from winning the party's endorsement, and was leading 47 percent to 44 percent when a deadlock was declared.

In the history of the United States, a handful of transgender people have held elected office. None has represented a major city. In November, Minneapolis will almost certainly elect one (Jenkins) and perhaps two.

"I think people really haven't noticed," Cunningham says, noting that neither is campaigning on their gender or sexual identity. "To be able to walk this path together with Andrea is such an honor for me."

For Jenkins, the fact that two trans candidates are seeing success is a good sign for a group that, until just recently, survived through suppression, self-denial, and conscious invisibility.

"I think it means we are growing as a society. People are able to look beyond identity and really focus on the issues and experience. It's a big deal. It's a really big deal."

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BY CHRIS PARKER

THE PLOT TO KILL CONSUMER PROTECTION

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Last month, former Equifax CEO Richard Smith plodded to Washington, D.C. for his congressional perp walk. It wasn't as satisfying as Cersei Lannister's naked stroll through King's Landing, but then *Game of Thrones* always has been more concerned with corruption than Congress has.

Smith testified about Equifax's failure to apply a software patch, allowing hackers to make off with the credit information of 40 percent of the U.S. population. Members of Congress also questioned him about Equifax's attempts to force anyone inquiring about their account to submit to arbitration, making them ineligible for future class-action suits.

Wells Fargo CEO Tim Sloan was there too, picking up where his predecessor John Stumpf left off last year, when he confessed his company opened 2.1 million unauthorized banking and credit card accounts. Stumpf claimed that was the limit of the bank's wrongdoing.

It wasn't, and he knew it.

Since then the number of crooked accounts has grown to 3.5 million, extending back more than a decade. Wells Fargo also made unauthorized auto insurance charges, overcharged small businesses for processing, changed mortgage terms without notice, and withheld car loan refunds, among other schemes.

Yet Wells Fargo protected itself with what experts describe as the most restrictive arbitration clause in the banking industry. Such clauses are a staple of consumer contracts for everything from phone service to financial advice.

Should a dispute arise, it forces consumers out of the court system and into a shadowy realm where appeals aren't allowed, corporations historically wield a huge advantage—when not outright rigging the system—and details of misconduct are kept private.

It's essentially a divide-and-conquer strategy, making customers challenge the bank's malfeasance individually, instead of pooling their efforts to contest as one. In other words, if Wells Fargo sawed a woman in half, each of her body's cells would have to bring its own case.

It's allowed the company to continue to evade accountability, even after the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB) fined it \$185 million. Most cases haven't made it to court, diverted by fine print into private arbitration hearings.

In July, the CFPB tried to even the odds, ruling that arbitration clauses can't bar consumers from joining class-action suits. The GOP Congress leaped to Wells Fargo's relief, plotting to repeal the rule. Then Equifax imploded, threatening the

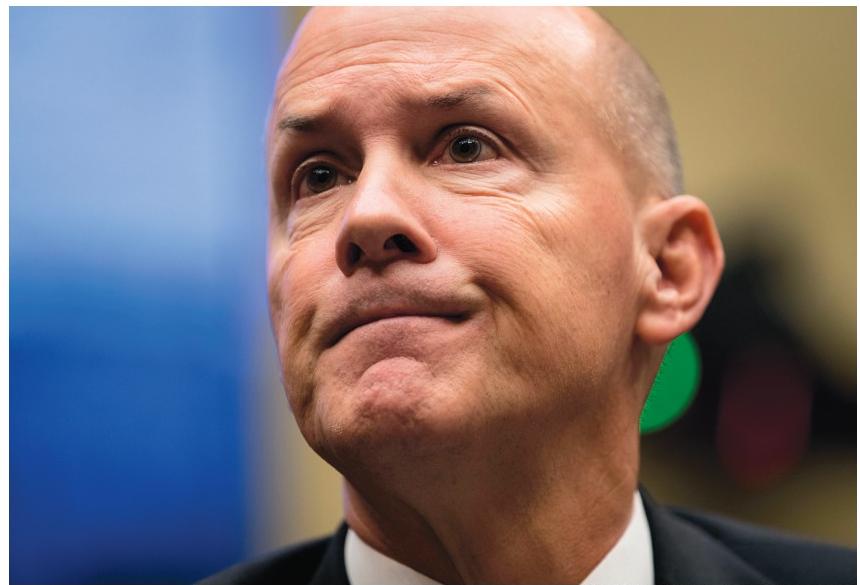
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rescue mission—at least temporarily—with lousy optics.

This was merely the latest Republican attack in its ongoing war with the CFPB, which formed in 2008 after the U.S. economy tanked under an onslaught of fraud and avarice. With consumer protection increasingly whittled away by keen lobbyists and cunning corporate lawyers, the idea was to build an agency whose sole mission was protecting consumers.

The CFPB scrutinizes everything from financial products to college loans to rent-to-own operations. It's also charged with protecting people from deception and abuse, while informing them of their rights.

At times, it seems to be the only federal agency interested in stopping fraud. Though it has no criminal policing powers, it fined Bank of America and Citibank a collective \$1.4 billion for deceptive credit card practices. It tuned up Transunion and Equifax with a \$22 million fine for luring customers into revolving payments for credit monitoring. And it hit Corinthian College for \$713 million for predatory student loans that funded near-worthless degrees.

During its brief life, the bureau has established itself as the only Washington agency more responsive to consumers than to lobbyists. Since 2011, it's handled 1.2 million complaints, returning over \$12 billion to consumers.

Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson calls the agency "vitally important to American consumers.... They mount large national enforcement actions that bring in millions of dollars on behalf of the public and return people's rightful money to them when companies have committed fraud."

In Washington, this only makes them dangerous.

THE PROTECTION RACKET

In June, the House GOP passed the Financial Choice Act. It rolls back many of the provisions enacted to prevent

After losing the financial data of 40 percent of the U.S. population, Equifax CEO Richard F. Smith tried to use fine print to keep people from suing.

the reckless behavior that provoked the 2008 financial crisis.

The "choice," in this case, is largely for the benefit of big banks. It allows them to once again overextend their assets and engage in speculative trading. "Choice" also grants Congress (read: lobbyists) the power to oversee financial regulators, and dismantle rules for orderly bankruptcy proceedings should an institution go bust.

It's essentially a return to the Wild West, all the lessons of the last crisis now dust in the wind. The legislation reads like a mash note to bankers, while systematically corroding consumer protection.

This hasn't stopped Minnesota's Republicans from desperately spinning it as a bonanza for the little guy.

"I want to protect folks at home from being put on the hook for Wall Street's bad behavior," wrote Rep. Jason Lewis (R-Woodbury) in a June Facebook post. "Tax dollars have no business propping up massive financial institutions that are 'too big'—or too well-connected—to fail."

University of Minnesota law professor Prentiss Cox has a more pointed take: "This bill is plainly about protecting the [finance] industry."

While Trump and Republicans imply that banks have struggled under laws enacted after the 2008 crash, don't tell their bottom lines. They show record profits three of the last four years. Despite claims of tight credit, the total number of commercial and industrial loans reached pre-crash levels three years ago.

Yet Minnesota's congressmen still pretend the sky is falling, hoping to cast themselves as the saviors of small banks.

"There was a lot of overreach—while



JEFF WHEELER, STAR TRIBUNE

well-intended—which has hurt a lot of community banks, credit unions, and small institutions, which provide support and the vast majority of loans go from those institutions to small businesses,” argues Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie) in a video he created. “It’s constricted capital and hurt our economy to the point where we’ve literally lost one community bank each and every single day.”

Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano) doubled down on that thesis: “Through the passage of the Financial CHOICE Act, we begin to undo the redundant and excessive bureaucratic regulations that are strangling our community banks and credit unions.”

Both trade in rhetoric unhinged to reality. From 2008 to 2017, the number of com-

Congressman Jason Lewis voted for a bill that’s “plainly about protecting the [finance] industry.”

If Paulsen, Lewis, and Emmer have their way, the CFPB would lose authority to avenge the abusive practices of those hawking debt, mortgage, or foreclosure relief, and credit cards, and to police fraud among student loan lenders and debt collectors.

The agency would go from public defender to hapless security guard.

“The rhetoric is absurd here,” says Cox, a onetime CFPB board member. “The idea that this is somehow about financial choice is just totally bogus.... What you need to

“THE IDEA THAT THIS IS SOMEHOW ABOUT FINANCIAL CHOICE IS JUST TOTALLY BOGUS.”

mmercial banks (community and otherwise) did fall from 7,175 to 4,982 last quarter, though the number of mid-size and large community banks has increased the last three decades.

For smaller institutions, consolidation is the real culprit. More than two-thirds of those closing or failing are acquired by other community banks, merely resulting in bigger entities. And they’re doing quite well, thank you. Last year, they posted a 10 percent increase in revenues, just a few percentage points behind their bigger peers.

The “Choice” Act also allows financial advisers to offer misleading retirement advice. Instead of forcing them to act in a customer’s best interest, it lets them funnel investments that may bring lower returns to the client but higher compensation to the adviser.

ask them is to name a specific enforcement action that was a misuse of their powers. You’ll get nothing.”

(We wanted to ask, but Paulsen, Lewis, and Emmer all failed to respond to repeated interview requests.)

The Choice Act also moves the agency’s funding from the Federal Reserve to congressional control, a structure originally avoided for fear lobbyists would bring the CFPB to heel.

In April, more than 80 groups—including the Consumers Union, the NAACP, and the National Fair Housing Alliance—registered their opposition in a letter. Nineteen attorneys general, Swanson among them, wrote their own missive, claiming “it’s no surprise Wall Street wants to chain [the CFPB] up so it can’t do its work.”



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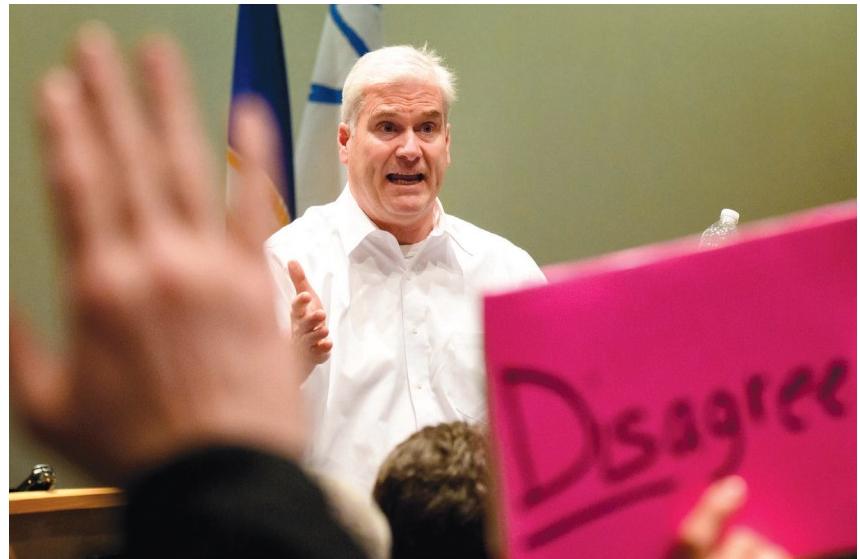
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GLEN STUBBE, STAR TRIBUNE

"We created an agency out of a crisis, and it's doing what it's supposed to do," Cox says. "It's attacking an industry that had been under-regulated and essentially out of control as to consumer protection issues, and it's done that very effectively. The result is a counterattack by the industry and those that are supporting them."

Congressman Tom Emmer claims to be rescuing small banks, despite all evidence to the contrary.

in something like an income-based repayment program... [and] we don't actually get paid for outperformance in that side of the equation."

Lukach has seen the underside of that equation. "I finally got one person that said we can verify your income and see what's available. Three months later the letter to verify my income came," he says.

"At this point I was behind on payments and just hitting a dead end. So in December of 2015 I filed a complaint with the CFPB. Within two days of submitting that complaint, I received a call from what [Navient] called 'a consumer ambassador' and they basically said this department exists because of the CFPB."

In January, the CFPB sued Navient, the country's largest servicer of student loan debt, for abusive practices. The company was charged with deceiving and stonewalling borrowers, misleading them about repayment options, and steering them into options that pushed them further in debt.

Navient, which services one out of every four student loans, is accused of "systematically and illegally failing borrowers," and creating "obstacles to repayment by providing bad information, processing payments incorrectly, and failing to act when borrowers complained."

The company's response reveals its true colors, arguing that it's not contractually obligated to "act in the interest of the consumer." Equally revealing: Trump's Department of Education is refusing to cooperate with CFPB's investigation.

"Unfortunately, I haven't had a happy ending yet," Lukach says. "I called them back several times and they ended up closing my case saying I never responded. I enrolled at community college, literally just to defer the loans because an entire semester part-

time was cheaper than paying the loans."

After finishing his master's in June, Lukach's back in the same boat, trying to manage his payments. The CFPB says he has options, even if Navient reps swear that's a lie. He now knows better.

"Having a federal office behind that is so important. To have a company respond in two days when I've been trying for months to get anyone to listen to my story, that's incredible. No wonder people are trying to get rid of it."

AND THE BANDITS SCHEME

Navient's issues metastasized because students signed contracts with a mandatory arbitration clause, forcing victims to fight back individually, rather than as a group.

"The right to have your dispute resolved before a jury of your peers is as American

suits. The strategy has emboldened fraud on a massive scale.

At one point, nearly every major bank was rigging accounts to generate overdraft fees. The scheme relied on the knowledge that customers wouldn't spend hours in arbitration to recover \$100 of improper fees.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) told the Wall Street Journal that such clauses are "a windfall for the companies, in terms of how you settle their cheating.

"You've had banks and credit-card companies nickel-and-diming consumers, and one of the things that makes them think twice is the idea of a massive lawsuit. Nobody is going to get a lawyer over a \$10 overcharge, but when you overcharge millions of people \$10, the bank or the credit-card company makes out like a bandit" in arbitration.

Even when someone does challenge them, arbitration rulings are usually pri-

NAVAL RESERVIST KEVIN ZIOBER SAYS HE LOST HIS \$180,000-A-YEAR JOB AFTER TELLING HIS BOSSSES HE WAS ABOUT TO BE DEPLOYED.

as it gets; it's a fundamental core American democratic principle," says Attorney General Swanson. "To think that millions upon millions of consumers are forfeiting their fundamental right to have their day in court because of fine print in a contract...."

Just ask Gretchen Carlson. The Anoka native had an arbitration clause in her contract with Fox News, preventing her from suing for sexual harassment.

"The arbitration process—often argued to be a quicker and cheaper method of dispute resolution for employees—instead has silenced millions of women who otherwise may have come forward if they knew they were not alone," wrote Carlson in Time Magazine.

It's not just sexual harassment. In 2012, California Naval Reservist Kevin Ziober says he lost his \$180,000-a-year job after telling his bosses he was about to be deployed to Afghanistan, a violation of federal job protections for military members. The company claims he was fired for unrelated reasons, but Ziober can't contest the matter in court. He too signed an employment contract forcing him into arbitration.

Though arbitration may sound preferable to the expense and anguish of court, it hands a major advantage to companies. The costs savings aren't much: Arbitrators usually charge \$300-\$400 per hour minimum, and some bill into the thousands of dollars. But arbitration clauses typically bar the consumer from joining class-action

vate, with no appeals and little documentation. Like a tree falling in a vast forest, Wells Fargo's customers didn't hear the millions of other victims, and the press remained none the wiser.

THE DAY OF RECKONING

Three years ago, Swanson went after Globe University and the Minnesota School of Business (MSB), which used arbitration clauses to avoid the reckoning when students discovered their \$70,000 criminal justice degrees were unaccredited and useless.

In January, both schools were ordered to make restitution to 1,200 students. By July, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that the schools issued loans without proper licenses at illegally high interest rates. Swanson intends to seek forgiveness and/or refunds for all loans made after January 1, 2009.

"The schools had an arbitration clause, and it says all [legal] proceedings have to be instituted within 12 months of the date [they] lie to you, basically," Swanson says. "Many of these students didn't even know they had a claim until after 12 months go by, because it was later in their education they realized the program isn't even accredited."

In 2009, Swanson also brought a case against National Arbitration Forum, then the world's biggest arbitration company, adjudicating over 200,000 cases annually. The St. Louis Park company portrayed itself as fair and independent. But it was actu-



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GLEN STUBBE, STAR TRIBUNE

ally owned by a private equity company that ran a bunch of collection companies, which sent National 60 percent of its claims.

This left National hardly impartial, with a devastating conflict of interest. Swanson sued for fraud. National closed.

"We heard from arbitrators that were blackballed and essentially told, 'You're not going to be an arbitrator anymore because you're ruling for the consumer,'" she says. "That's one of the problems with arbitration. The court system is paid by the taxpayers. Judges are neutral and their funding comes from the public."

"I FOLLOWED THE MONEY"

This summer, President Trump reversed a ban on arbitration clauses for nursing home residents. In an industry notorious for impropriety, it was a green light for abuse.

"I once talked to a CEO who had been in board meetings where they said, 'We can't do this because an attorney general might come after us,' or 'We can't do this because somebody might file a lawsuit against us,'" says Swanson. "He said he's never been in a boardroom where they said, 'We can't do this because someone might file an arbitration claim.'"

Trump's change is bad news for Plymouth lawyer Mark Kosieradzki, who's handled several cases of nursing home neglect. One involved two eighty-something victims who were raped by employees. Another involved an employee thrice suspended for suspicion of sexual abuse.

Then there was the man suffering from dementia who became dehydrated because he'd forgotten how to drink. He went into a coma within two weeks of check-in, ultimately dying.

Kosieradzki handled the wrongful death case through arbitration. Three arbitrators collected \$60,750. After expert witness and attorney's fees, the man's daughter received less than \$20,000.

Kosieradzki fell upon the specialty some-

Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson sued over \$10,000 criminal justice degrees that were worthless.

what by accident when a client arrived with a nursing home claim.

"Nobody was handling them," he explains. "'They're old people.' 'They're going to die anyway' and 'They're going to live maybe three years.' I'm thinking, 'I don't like the way that sounds. Someone's old, so no harm, no foul? I don't like that.'"

As he dug in, he concluded the main issues weren't so much malicious behavior—though that existed. Rather, he found that homes were understaffed and underfunded, skating by on the lack of accountability afforded by arbitration.

"So I started doing what reporters have been doing since Watergate. I followed the money. What I realized is money gets siphoned out of these nursing homes legally into all of these other places—subcorporations and LLCs. Shell companies.

"These big real estate investment trusts and these major corporations are buying up nursing homes and they're cutting costs like crazy. So they're asking people to work harder for less money, longer hours, and fewer benefits. The main reason companies want to do these arbitrations is because they can control the risk. Even though it costs them more to get there, the costs also limit plaintiffs bringing claims."

DON'T GET ANY IDEAS

It often feels like the main purpose of the Financial Choice Act is to slap down increasingly frustrated consumers and put us back in our place—angry but defeated. There's no other explanation for a clause prohibiting the CFPB from informing consumers of their rights.

The act also halts the agency from looking into predatory lending like payday loans, prepaid credit cards, and auto-title loans, or making rules governing such lenders.

(That sound you hear is a thousand Nigerian princes clapping at once.)

The GOP's move is designed to sabotage the new CFPB rule on payday lenders, which outnumber McDonald's in this country. Most of their profits come from forcing borrowers to roll their debt over into new loans (with additional fees). So the CFPB placed restrictions on how often and how much lenders can lend beyond that first loan. It also limits how often lenders can attempt to pull money from a customer's account when there are insufficient funds, saddling the consumer with expensive overdraft fees.

The agency found that nearly 70 percent of customers had to take out a second loan to cover the first. Twenty percent wind up carrying 10 or more loans, sentencing them to a treadmill of debt with little hope of righting their finances.

You don't need to tell Brian Fullman about it. He works for Isaiah Mn, a 100-congregation coalition that works for biblically based social justice on issues like affordable housing and immigration. Fullman wound up with a payday loan after his wife flipped her car, breaking her neck.

"She broke three different vertebrae that protect her spine," Fullman recalls. It left her unable to work, yet their mortgage required two salaries. They eked out the first few months until Fullman found himself \$300 short on a payment.

"YOU REALLY FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN PROSTITUTED OR SWINDLED. AND YOU BLAME YOURSELF."

"When I got the money I felt, 'I'm being responsible. I'm taking care of stuff.' But by that third month you feel like a complete fool for even dealing with them," he says. "They become very shrewd and very arrogant retrieving their money and accrued interest, such that you really feel like you've been prostituted or swindled... and you blame yourself. Why did I sign it? It's my fault I'm in this position."

Fullman couldn't afford to pay off the balance. So when he went to pay the interest a fourth time, his payday lender told him: "CFPB has put rules and regulations that we can't continue to keep drawing interest and interest. You have to close that out or resolve it."

To subvert that rule, they offered to open another loan. Otherwise they'd debit the full amount from his bank account, a serious threat to those living hand-to-mouth.

"They'd say, 'Just give us the interest. We'll do the paperwork like you paid off your loan, and then we'll reopen it again,'" Fullman recalls. "If you're desperate and



JACQUELYN MARTIN, ASSOCIATED PRESS

don't have the money, the last thing you want is your bank account to close because I get automatic withdrawal of a few of my bills."

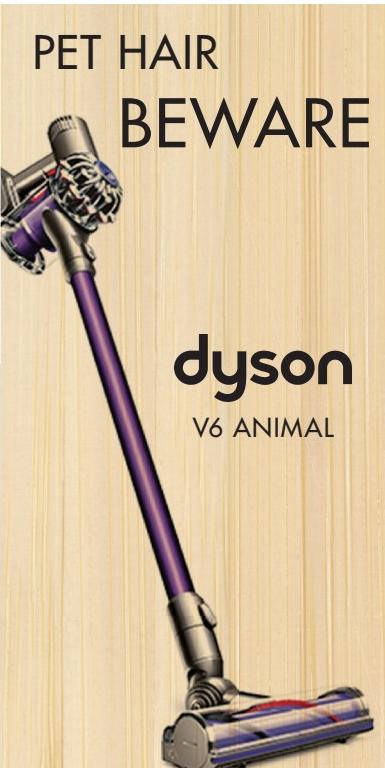
He eventually found his way out when he discovered Exodus Lending, a small, community lender formed when payday lenders moved into Minneapolis' Longfellow neighborhood near Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

"People in the church started opening up and sharing their own stories and their own experiences. Then they thought, 'We need to get rid of this,'" says Exodus

When Richard Cordray steps down, Trump can merely sabotage the agency, like he's done with the EPA.

companies at shareholder meetings. Wells Fargo and US Bank are big investors in companies like Cash America, Dollar Financial, and First Cash Financial, extending more than \$1 billion to them.

"I've had an account with Wells Fargo for over 10 years and I can't get a \$300 loan from them?" he asks. "But you can give it to these people, so they can give it to me? It's sad."



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THE DAILY GRIND

Get to know six micro-roasters firing up quality coffee in MSP



A Baker's Wife
chocolate croissant
and latte from
Wesley Andrews

E. KATIE HOLM

BY EMILY CASSEL

The Twin Cities has long had a coffee culture every bit as robust as your favorite dark roast blend.

This is where java giants Caribou Coffee and Dunn Brothers are headquartered, after all. But it isn't just the big guys who call the area home. As craft beer booms, the caffeine scene is having itself a moment, too, with micro-roasters bringing complex, flavorful beans to countless cafes and coffee shops.

We caught up with six roasters doing very different things to learn why they brew what they brew.

Wesley Andrews

Johan Podlewski and Jared Thompson were just 18 years old when they started roasting coffee—and a tender 21 when they opened their Whittier coffee shop last November.

Yes, the guys who roast the beans for Modist's acclaimed First Call cold-press coffee lager were just old enough to drink it when it hit taplines in 2016.

These wunderkinds are the kind to take it slow. That's true both with their beans (they roasted and perfected only one coffee in their first year, two their second) and with their brews (behind the Wesley Andrews counter, ice water filters through a stylish glass Kyoto cold brew tower at the rate of about one drop per second). And they encourage customers to slow down, too. The shop was initially called "Wesley Andrews Conversation Compliments"—a wordy moniker they've since trimmed—but the sentiment remains. These painstakingly prepared drinks are meant not just to accompany your commute but to encourage you to sit down and engage, all without being intimidated by things like the aforementioned Kyoto tower. "We've had

people tell us, 'It seems like you're having so much fun,'" Thompson says. "It's like... why wouldn't we be?"

111 E. 26TH ST.
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WESLEYANDREWS.CC

Driven Coffee Roasters

Coffee for moms.

Well, not *just* for moms. But Matt Vassau and Dan Oksnevad, the duo behind Driven, run a roastery for all those moms who get labeled "unhip"; for the uninitiated, for the people who might be a little too intimidated to walk into a hyper-trendy, Instagram-friendly coffee shop or don't know what the heck a Chemex is.

The guys met in Minneapolis but roast out of Chaska, a suburban location that informs Driven's approachable personality. "The thing about the suburbs is, there's just not a lot a lot of roasters out here,"

Vassau explains. "It feels like a dramatically underserved population, from our perspective." It's why he says their eventual brick-and-mortar cafe won't be in the city, but out there in the 'burbs.

800-561-6827
DRIVENCOFFEE.COM

Blackeye Roasting Co.

From the matte black bags of beans to the slogan (#wakeupwithablackeye), the Blackeye guys are kings of cool—and so is their coffee. Blackeye trades in nitro cold brew, iced coffee's kickass cousin. Velvety and smooth, the gas-infused brews—available in growlers, in cans, and on tap—drink like an alcohol-free, caffeine-packed Guinness.

"We're garage-door entrepreneurs who got lucky," founder Matt McGinn says, grinning. He first started roasting out of his apartment, and this summer, just three years after founding Blackeye, he

WE'VE BEEN IN LEFT FIELD FOR YEARS.



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DRINK

E. KATIE HOLM

Wesley Andrew's owners Johan Podlewski and Jared Thompson working in the shop

oversaw the completion of a brand-new, 30,000-square-foot brewing facility in St. Paul. The fast-growing company now has two coffee shops of its own in town, and Blackeye brews are available at more than 1,000 places throughout the Midwest.

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS
BLACKEYEROASTING.CO

his heart was all along.

Histhree-year-old roastery is aptly named; Svejda really is bootstrapping this operation. The former barista and cafe manager doesn't have outside investors, and when he got his start in the bean biz in 2014, he did it in his dad's garage with a second-hand roaster he fetched from Iowa in a UHaul. But what started as a man in a garage with a handful of wholesale customers has grown into a St. Paul-based roastery with a booming online business thanks to a rotating lineup of flavorful, accessible short-run coffees that change with the seasons.

651-528-7543

BOOTSTRAPCOFFEROASTERS.COM

Spyhouse Coffee

Before it was a roastery, Spyhouse was a Nicollet Avenue coffeehouse, a brownstone where in-the-know coffee lovers met friends to smoke cigarettes over cappuccinos.

It's obvious the three additional Spyhouses share a bloodline with that 17-year-old sibling. They have the same industrial-meets-mid-century-modern cool—all exposed brick and clean lines, antique fixtures, gold flourishes. But behind the scenes, founder Christian Johnson, a self-proclaimed coffee obsessive who spends hours each week just reading about the stuff, was retooling his business plan. He wanted to support independent farmers, especially women. He wanted to focus on ethical sourcing, and to roast in-house. Today, he does, thanks to collaborations with small farms around the world and to the cafe and roasting facility that opened in Northeast in 2013.

Of course, he's doing it with Spyhouse flair. The roaster is an antique, too: a hulking, refurbished Probat UG so stylish you may look at it and think, "Maybe I need a German coffee roaster from the 1950s."

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS
SPYHOUSECOFFEE.COM

Peace Coffee Roasters

At 21 years old, Peace Coffee has been around since before there even was a fair trade certification. That's part of the reason behind its unique structure; as one of 22 co-owners of an importing co-op, they only buy fair trade and organic coffee from small farmer cooperatives.

Peace Coffee's director of coffee, Anne Costello, explains that beans are typically bought and sold in 40,000-pound increments. That's tough on small farmers—and back in the '90s, "We couldn't buy 40,000 pounds either!" Costello laughs. The co-op means the roastery has just about the most direct possible relationship with producers, who band together to get A) better prices and B) more information about how to farm organically and produce a better product.

"It's not only the price piece that farmers get access to—it's the knowledge to create a better product so you can continue to get better prices over time," Costello says. It's helped Peace grow, too. The company now buys more than 800,000 pounds of coffee a year.

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS
PEACECOFFEE.COM

Bootstrap Coffee Roasters

Bootstrap doesn't have a cafe of its own, which wasn't founder Micah Svejda's plan at all. He initially wanted to own a coffee shop. Then he thought maybe he'd open a coffee shop that roasted its own coffee. Then—ah, hell, turns out roasting's where

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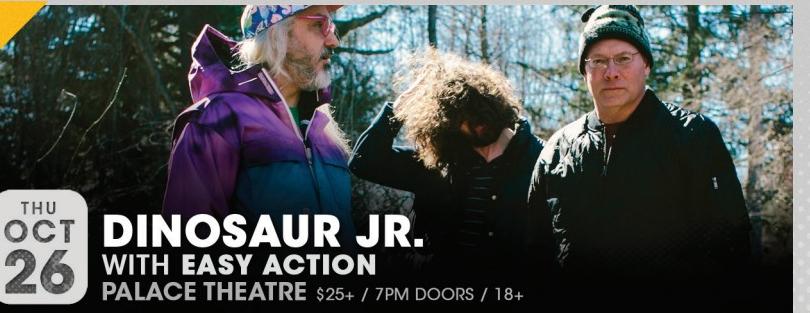
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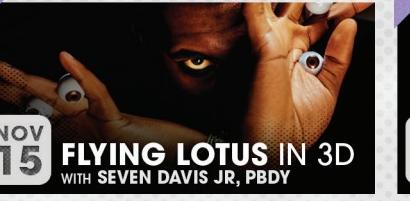
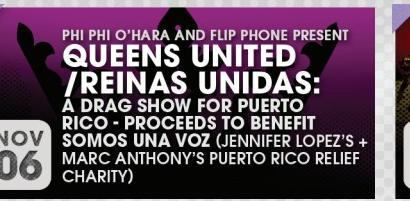
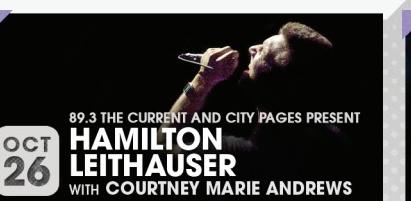
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- WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

UP NEXT PALACE THEATRE

- | | |
|---|--|
| OCT 27+28 UMPHREY'S MC GEE W/ SINKANE | NOV 18 ST. VINCENT FEAR THE FUTURE TOUR |
| NOV 22 DOOMTREE | DEC 01 GRIZZLY BEAR W/ SERPENTWITHFEET |
| JAN 13 BIG HEAD TODD AND THE MONSTERS | JAN 24 BØRNS |
| JAN 30 FIRST AID KIT W/ VAN WILLIAM | FEB 17 HIPPO CAMPUS W/ SURE SURE |
| FEB 23 JUDAH & THE LION GOING TO MARS TOUR | FEB 24 WALK THE MOON |
| FINE LINE MONDAY, OCTOBER 23 | |
| TRIPLE ROCK MONDAY, OCTOBER 23 | |
| AMSTERDAM BAR & HALL MONDAY, OCTOBER 23 | |
| FINE LINE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27 & SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28 | |
| THE CEDAR WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1 | |

COMING TO THE DAKOTA



ARTURO SANDOVAL
OCTOBER 19



MINDI ABAIR AND THE BONESHAKERS
OCTOBER 20



DAVINA AND THE VAGABONDS
OCTOBER 21 & 22



BADFINGER'S STRAIGHT UP STARRING JOEY MOLLAND
OCTOBER 23 & 24



BUMPER JACKSONS
OCTOBER 25



RAMSEY LEWIS
OCTOBER 26 & 27

OCT 23
7:30

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PRESERVATION HALL LEGACY QUINTET



DAVID SANBORN
OCTOBER 28 & 29



JEFF DANIELS BAND
OCTOBER 30

TAKE ME TO THE RIVER

WILLIAM BELL, CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE, & BOBBY RUSH
OCTOBER 31 & NOVEMBER 1



KENNY LATTIMORE
NOVEMBER 2



DJANGO FESTIVAL ALL-STARS FEATURING DORADO SCHMITT
NOVEMBER 3



THE HILLBENDERS
PLAY TOMMY:
A BLUEGRASS OPRY
NOVEMBER 4



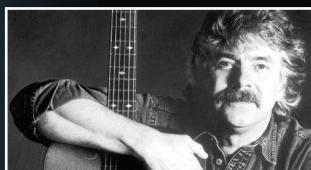
LIZZ WRIGHT
W/ SPECIAL GUEST LEYLA MCCALLA
NOVEMBER 5



CRYSTAL BOWERSOX
NOVEMBER 7



ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY:
THE ELLA CENTURY
NOVEMBER 8



TOM RUSH
NOVEMBER 9

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LEO KOTTKE
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TODD PARK MOHR
OF BIG HEAD TODD & THE MONSTERS

NOV 27
7:30



STEVE COLE
NOVEMBER 10



HOLLY BOWLING
NOVEMBER 11



CATHERINE RUSSELL
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A LIST

THURSDAY 10,000 Laughs offers epic comedy P. 24

FRIDAY Gun culture examined through art at Space 369 P. 25

SATURDAY Surly goes dark P. 27

WEDNESDAY 10.18

PODCAST

MY FAVORITE MURDER LIVE

NORTHROP

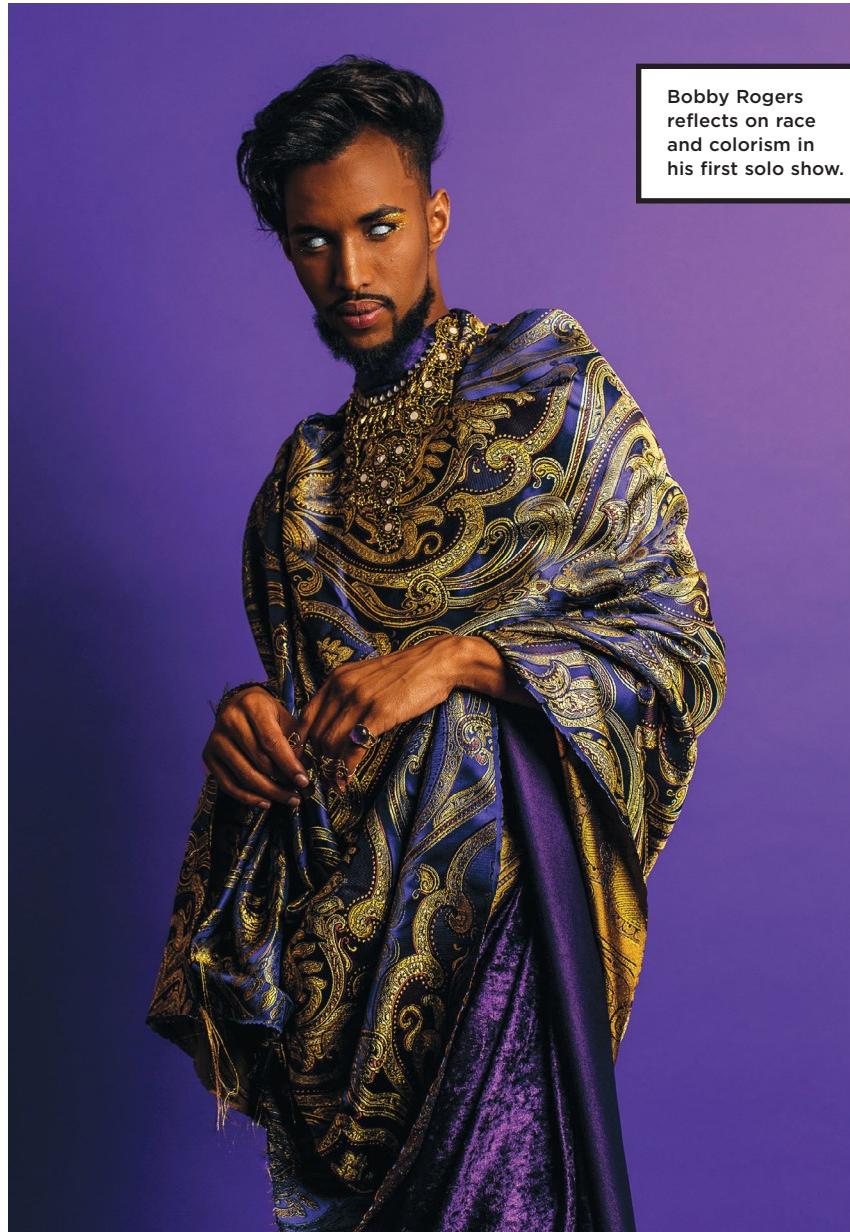
Have you ever tried to bring up a hilarious story about murder at a party only to have everyone look at you like, well, a murderer? Fear not: The Murderinos are coming. Hosted by Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark, the *My Favorite Murder* podcast combines true crime stories with dark humor in a match made in homicide heaven. This week, the scream queens will bring their live show to Minneapolis. Whether they're revisiting the Bain Family murders of New Zealand, the Brownout Strangler, or the Pillow Pyro of Southern California, Kilgariff and Hardstark are like those two creepy friends at the slumber party who you never want to stop talking. If you're a sucker for a scary story or just love to laugh at the darkest possible moment, this is your chance to join fellow maniacs for a show that always kills. 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday. \$29.50-\$45; \$150 VIP. 84 Church St. SE, Minneapolis; 612-624-2345. —PATRICK STRAIT

COMEDY

J. ELVIS WEINSTEIN

ACME COMEDY CO.

J. Elvis Weinstein, Josh to the Twin Cities faithful, takes a break from multiple projects to perform at Acme Comedy Co. this week. "I've been doing more standup because part of my brain is tied up with things I have no desire to deal with," he explains. Those projects include the soon-to-be released documentary about rocker and actor Michael Des Barres, as well as one about standup comedy in Asia. He also has a podcast with Andy Kindler called *Thought Spiral*. "I feel I have some sort of creative outlet going on while I'm doing the not so creative aspects of some of the other projects." Further complicating matters was a recent stint on jury duty. He was the foreman. "I've been on jury duty five times, and four times I was the foreman." Helpful advice from Weinstein: Don't say anything in the jury room. "The



Bobby Rogers reflects on race and colorism in his first solo show.

BOBBY ROGERS, THE BLACKER THE BERRY, IV

rule seems to be whoever says, 'We need to pick a foreman' ends up being the foreman." Onstage, he talks about his personal life in what he hopes is a universal manner. "I try to keep myself from getting too political, because I need a break from that. I spend all day writing anti-Trump tweets." 18+. 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30

p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$15-\$18. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. **Through Saturday —P.F. WILSON**

THEATER

WEDDING BAND

PENUMBRA THEATRE

Founder Lou Bellamy is now Penumbra Theatre's artistic director emeritus, but

he's far from retired. The veteran director is taking the helm for a new production of Alice Childress' play about an interracial romance. Writing during the heart of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, Childress imagined an African-American seamstress who develops a passionate mutual attraction with a white man in South Carolina circa 1918. The characters suffer censure from their community, and half a century after their imagined romance, the topic was still so controversial that *Wedding Band* wasn't produced professionally until 1972. It remained little known for decades, but in recent years companies have started to revive the script and make the case that it's an underappreciated classic. There's perhaps no organization better suited to tackle this complex and challenging script, which isn't just a plea for tolerance but an examination of intersectionality and an excoriation of white privilege. Local audiences who thrived to the Guthrie Theater's superb production of Childress' best-known play, *Trouble in Mind*, last year should take note of this rare opportunity to see a Penumbra production of this important follow-up. 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. \$15-\$40. 270 N. Kent St., St. Paul; 651-224-3180. **Through November 12 —JAY GABLER**

FESTIVAL

TWIN CITIES FILM FEST

KERASOTES SHOWPLACE
ICON THEATRE AT WEST END

This week, the Twin Cities Film Fest returns to West End for eight days of special screenings, director and actor talks, and more. While this festival has global offerings, there are quite a few local luminaries showcased as well. *The Year of Spectacular Men* is featured on opening night. It's directed by Minnesota native Lea Thompson, and stars her daughters, Zoey and Madelyn Deutch (the latter wrote the screenplay). All three will be at the event to chat about the project. Werner Herzog-produced *A Gray State* examines the true story of a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 ▶

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(ASSHOLES NEED NOT BOTHER)

A-LIST



Tap takes a variety
of forms at Cowles

BRENNNA BRELIE

CONTINUED FROM WEDNESDAY ▶

Minnesota filmmaker who worked in Hollywood until he murdered his family and committed suicide. Lighter fare includes *Permanent*, a comedy about teen angst, bad hair, and family quirks, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, starring another Minnesota native, Rachael Leigh Cook, who will also be at the festival. For the full schedule, lineup, and additional info, visit twincitiesfilmfest.org. \$12-\$20 per screening. 1625 W. End Blvd., St. Louis Park; 612-568-0375. **Through October 28 —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

THURSDAY 10.19

DANCE/FESTIVAL

TWIN CITIES TAP FESTIVAL

THE COWLES CENTER FOR DANCE
& THE PERFORMING ARTS

Now in its third year, the annual Twin Cities Tap Festival once again demonstrates not only the depth and breadth of tap talent here, it also illustrates the diversity in approaches, styles, and origin stories behind the companies, solo hoofers, and long-time influencers driving the tap boom in the Twin Cities. Thursday night's performances focus on cutting-edge troupes and youth ensembles. Friday and Saturday bring in more percussive-dance geniuses to set the floorboards on fire, including national treasure Dianne "Lady Di" Walker, plus our own Kaleena Miller Dance, Rhythmic Circus, Buckets and Tap Shoes, Elite Tap Feet, and Ricci Milan and Rick Ausland with Flying Foot Forum. For more info and a complete schedule of happenings, visit www.twincitiestap.com. 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. \$15-\$30. 528 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-206-3636. **Through Saturday —CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

ART/PARTY

THIRD THURSDAY: ARTOBERFEST

MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART

The Minneapolis Institute of Art's latest traveling exhibition, "Eyewitness News: Making History in Eighteenth-Century Europe," features historic paintings commissioned by the powerful and wealthy, covering battles, successions, and ceremonies. For this installment of Third Thursday, local breweries will take these large-scale works as their muse, infusing beers with a variety of flavors. Able Seedhouse & Brewery, Fair State Brewing Cooperative, Fulton Beer, and Bad Weather Brewing Company will all be on hand to offer drinks and chat. There will also be beer-inspired arts and crafts, such as making your own koozie, plus live music from rock band BBGUN. Normally "Eyewitness News" costs \$20 to view, but if you sign up for My Mia (a free service that scores you discounts and invites to special events) you can reserve free tickets to the exhibition that night. Visit the.ticket.artsmia.org to sign up and RSVP. 6 to 9 p.m. Free. 2400 Third Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-870-3131. **—JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

COMEDY/FESTIVAL

10,000 LAUGHS COMEDY FESTIVAL

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

With 13 shows, six venues, and 60 comedians, the 10,000 Laughs Festival continues to be the biggest comedy festival in Minnesota. This year's event is undoubtedly the most talent-heavy, with headliners Beth Stelling, Dan St. Germain, and Shane Torres topping a list that also includes powerhouses like Carlos Delgado from Los Angeles and Dave Losso out of Chicago, plus local favorites Jeff Pfoser, Chloe Radcliffe, and Wendy

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ART/GALLERY**ART IS MY WEAPON**

GAMUT GALLERY

We need to talk about guns. Two separate gallery exhibitions, one at Gamut Gallery and another at Space 369, are adding to the discussion. "Art Is My Weapon" takes a page from Brian Borrello's Guns in the Hands of Artists project, where decommissioned guns became non-deadly works of art. For this group show, 250 guns, collected in 2016 through a buyback program, were sent to artists to become raw material in their artwork. The results include sculptures, photography, paintings, and glasswork. Some guns have become candle holders, others are now lawn tchotches, and others have inspired new takes on shooting-range targets. The opening reception from 7 to 11 p.m. on Thursday, October 19, is free and features a spoken-word performance by Chadwick Phillips. The closing reception from 7 to 9 p.m. features a panel discussion at 8 p.m. Friday, October 27. 717 S. 10th St., Minneapolis; 612-367-4327. **Through October 27** —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER



MARGIE ROTONDO

Maybury. In addition to the insanely deep roster, one of the biggest appeals of the festival is the unique shows where standups can flex their comic muscle. There's the Sober/Not Sober show where comedians perform a set, get fucked up, and try to perform that set again; the Vaudeville Remix variety evening featuring music, comedy, and yo-yo tricks; and the always unpredictable Dirty Show, which is exactly what it sounds like. This is not just a bunch of comedians getting drunk and telling jokes all weekend. Well, it is that. But it's a lot more, too. For complete details on shows, performers, and tickets, visit 10000laughs.com. **Through Saturday** —PATRICK STRAIT

DANCE**GORGES**

THE SOUTHERN THEATER

This mini-fest of dance allows the curious to, ahem, "gorge" on some of the tastiest movement happening in the Twin Cities. First, there's DaNCEBUMS, a riotous and delightful group that proves anyone who thinks they can dance probably can. April Sellers Dance Collective is all about the unexpected with a bountiful, playful approach to the moving body in space. Several groups will be alternating evenings, while Detroit choreographer Kristi Faulkner will close each night with aplomb. Still not convinced? Check out the titles of the dance pieces: "The Animal Corridor," "Press Kit," "Four Letter Word." A night at the ballet this is not. 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday; 2:30 p.m. Sunday. \$20-\$24. 1420 S. Washington Ave., Minneapolis; 612-326-1811. **Through Sunday** —CAMILLE LEFEVRE

RADIO**WAIT, WAIT...
DON'T TELL ME!**

OPHEUM THEATRE

Conjured by certain political factions as a means of discrediting unfavorable press, the term "fake news" has become symptomatic of our national malaise. Long before being re-appropriated toward such unseemly ends, however, fake news was the comical cornerstone of *Wait, Wait... Don't Tell Me!* Since making its debut in 1998, the weekly broadcast has become a staple of National Public Radio, attracting listeners with its wittily skewed view of topical events. Hosted by Peter Sagal, the Peabody Award-winning program features a panel of humorists and journalists (plus the occasional celebrity guest) attempting to stump selected listeners over a variety of games involving news of the day. Though the show originates from studios in Chicago, road editions have become a regular feature, allowing fans from across the country to witness—and perhaps even participate in—the lampooning inherent to such games as Bluff the Listener and Not My Job. 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday. \$39-\$129. 910 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. **Through Friday** —BRAD RICHASON

FRIDAY 10.20

COMEDY**JIM NORTON**

PANTAGES THEATRE

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ▶

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ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

A-LIST

ART/GALLERY TEMPERED BEASTS

NORTHERN CLAY CENTER



ALESSANDRO GALLO

Mythology is rife with animal-human hybrids, including centaurs, fauns, sphinxes, and sirens. Our fascination with such creatures is endless, limited only by our own imaginations. Contemporary ceramist Lindsay Pichaske explores the line between human and animal, between the beautiful and the bizarre. Her ceramic animals raise questions about identity, sentience, and soul. Sculptural works blend humor and horror with vivacious color, visceral form, figure, and ferocity to ignite viewers' aesthetic sensibilities. Works by Alessandro Gallo, Crystal Morey, Adriel Tong, and Russell Wrinkle are also included. You'll never see Bambi, Fido, or Fluffy the same way again. There will be a public reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, October 20. Free. 2424 E. Franklin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-8007. **Through November 5 — CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

focus on social and political issues onstage, Norton refuses to forget his main responsibility. "Some comedians forget that our job is to be funny," he says. "You can talk about whatever you want but we're here to do it in a way that's funny for people." While he feels it's important to keep audiences on their toes, there's no mistaking what happens once Norton hits the stage. "If you go to a Jim Norton show, you know what you're getting into," he says. "If you don't know by now, and you come to one of my shows, you deserve to be upset." 7:30 p.m. \$35; \$85 VIP. 710 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. —PATRICK STRAIT

ART/GALLERY BOBBY ROGERS: THE BLACKER THE BERRY

PUBLIC FUNCTIONARY

Local photographer Bobby Rogers has his first solo show this week at Public Functionary. "The Blacker the Berry" draws inspiration from Harlem Renaissance writer Wallace Thurman's 1929 novel of the same name while also exploring contemporary examples of race discrimination and colorism via rapper Tupac Shakur and Kendrick Lamar. In his dynamic photos, Rogers uses his mastery of light and texture to celebrate black excellence, as he confronts the internalized racism he was taught as a young person. The talented artist also revels in black cultural traditions and futures, navigating through hip-hop, diaspora legacies, and dreams of next generations. There will be an opening reception at 7 p.m. Friday, October 20, and an artist's talk at 7 p.m. on Friday, November 10. Free. 1400 12th Ave. NE, Minneapolis; 612-978-5566. **Through November 25 — SHEILA REGAN**

ART/GALLERY CULTURE AS WEAPON

SPACE 369

In 2012, an ex-employee of Accent Signage Systems in Minneapolis who had been let go for poor work performance returned to his former place of employment and opened fire. He killed five people and injured three others. Local artist and curator John Schuerman knew them all. For the past several years, while running the now-defunct Instinct Gallery in downtown Minneapolis, he has curated exhibitions that take deep and unsettling dives into gun violence and gun culture. For this show in Space 369, he's including his own piece,

Cabooze

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OCTOBER 20

SUNDANCE HEAD
FEATURING
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GOING TO THE SUN
OCTOBER 19

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CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ▶

possible, Jim Norton wants to keep fans guessing. "I want people to know what to expect, but without being predictable," he says. Earlier this year, the comedian released his latest special, *Mouthful of Shame*, on Netflix, and he's wasting no time hitting the road again. He couldn't be happier about performing new material. "It drives you nuts doing the same jokes every single night," he says. "It's a relief to have the special out there so that I can do something different." While many comedians choose to

26 CITYPAGES.COM OCTOBER 18-24, 2017

Hidden Falls Park invites
ghouls to celebrate
Halloween.



CHRIS JUHN

Counting Installation, a harrowing work that includes meticulously rendered accounts of such details as receipts for target practice, days late to work, and last words spoken. Also included are Sean Smuda's riveting, art-historical photograph *Moment of the Day*, and pieces by Jennifer Davis, Michael Duffy, Ruthann Godollei, Christopher Harrison, and Jonathan Herrera. Taken singly and together, the works will leave your heart broken and intellect incited. There will be an opening reception on Friday, October 20, from 7 to 9 p.m. Other open hours are noon to 5 p.m. October 21 and October 27. 2242 University Ave. W., Dow Building, St. Paul; 612-208-9328. **Through October 27 — CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

SATURDAY 10.21

THEATER

**HALLOWEEN OUTDOOR
PUPPET EXTRAVAGANZA**

HIDDEN FALLS PARK

BareBones' Puppet Extravaganza returns to Hidden Falls Park this week for a series of shows full of spectacle, interactive fun, and treats. Drawing influences from historic traditions and literary sources, stilt walkers, puppets, fire dancers, and musicians will tell the tale of the circle of life, with a focus on the cold grave. Audiences will be welcome to honor the dead during the show or through tribute altars, set up on the grounds. Afterward, free hot food and drinks from Sisters' Camelot will warm up the night as the Brass Messengers play tunes. Dress weather-appropriate, as this show is outdoors. 7 p.m. Fridays through Sundays, plus Tuesday, October 31. \$10-\$20. 1313 Mississippi River Blvd., St. Paul. **Through October 31 — JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

BEER

SURLY DARKNESS DAY 2017

SURLY BREWING BROOKLYN CENTER

Tradition is the most important part of any holiday. Each year, on Darkness Eve, devout beer drinkers line up in Brooklyn Center, anxiously waiting to get their hands on coveted, wax-sealed bottles of Surly Darkness. The Russian Imperial Stout is acclaimed for its vanilla-smooth body, rich chocolate notes, and a sneaky ABV. There's a special atmosphere as the Surly nation takes over the parking lot, metal bands blaring as beers are raised in toast. God Came From Space, Sunless, Ghost Bath, Khemmis, and Toxic Holocaust will provide this year's brooding soundtrack. There'll be eight different food trucks and a diverse lineup of beers, led by 2017 Darkness, different cask versions of Darkness, and its next-of-kin beer, Damien. 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Free. 4811 Dusharme Dr., Brooklyn Center; 763-999-4040. —LOREN GREEN

FILM

NOSFERATU

PARKWAY THEATER

F.W. Murnau's 1922 masterpiece *Nosferatu* is the original vampire movie. While recent takes on bloodsuckers tend to veer into sexy, aspirational, or... glittery territory, the OG guy is creepy, killing entire boats of people, preying on women, and lurking in the shadows. With its on-location setting and gorgeous cinematography, the silent film has held up and still attracts audiences. See it for yourself this Saturday at Parkway Theater, where it will screen with an original soundtrack performed live by the Rats and People Motion Picture Orchestra Minnesota. Last year's show at Heights Theatre sold out, so you may want to get your tickets early. All ages. 8 p.m. \$10. 4814 Chicago Ave., Minneapolis; 612-827-2928. —JESSICA ARMBRISTER

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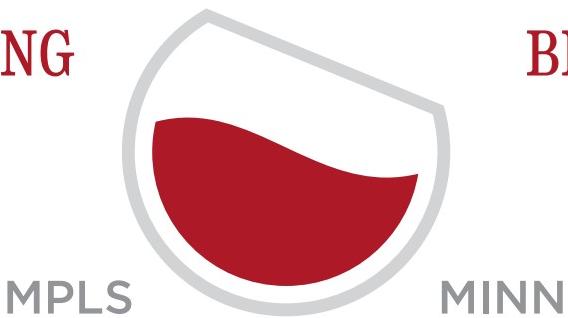


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AGENT OF CHAOS

Jackie Chan stars in *The Foreigner*, a somber action flick for the AARP set

Jackie Chan can't fight his way out of this mediocre thriller.



CHRISTOPHER RAPHAEL

BY BRYAN MILLER

Though it's based on a 25-year-old novel from British thriller writer Stephen Leather, *The Foreigner* fits comfortably into the mold more recently established by the Liam Neeson *Taken* series.

It's essentially the same plot—a father mercilessly tracks down those who've wronged his child—except here martial-arts movie legend Jackie Chan plays a dad whose daughter is killed in a terrorist bombing rather than kidnapped. Maybe the titled *Blowed-Up* was already, um, taken.

Before the attack, Chan's Quan Minh was a soft-spoken Chinese restaurant owner living in London with his only daughter. He's a widower whose other two children were killed by Thai pirates during his treacherous immigration to

Great Britain (shown onscreen in an ill-advised flashback).

Now with no kin and nothing left to live for, Quan dedicates the remainder of his life to finding the bombers. He harangues British government officials for information, and when the explosion is linked to a newly emergent Irish Republican Army splinter cell, he travels north to Shamrock country seeking vengeance.

Quan's target is Liam Hennessy (Pierce Brosnan), a former IRA fighter turned deputy minister for the government. Liam is under pressure from the Brits to uncover the men behind the attack, and from his old confederates to leverage the explosion into pardons for Irish political prisoners. Into this combustible mix comes the singleminded Quan. He only wants the names of the men who killed his daughter.

Of course Quan has his own very particular set of skills. He's a former special forces soldier with training in bomb-making, booby traps, and gunplay, to say nothing of his lightning-fast fists. But Quan is more an agent of chaos in the story than the driver of the narrative. Most of the screen time is dedicated to the web of intrigue created by Liam's conflicting allegiances to his old criminal cohorts and new government employers.

That might be more compelling if *The Foreigner* were truly interested in plumbing the moral murk for uneasy answers. Instead, all of it—Liam's past and his family conflicts, Quan's refugee backstory—is elaborate window dressing for a movie that draws sharp lines between good guys and bad guys and lets them fight it out.

Director Martin Campbell (*GoldenEye*, *Casino Royale*) stages crisp, competent

THE FOREIGNER
directed by Martin Campbell
area theaters, now open

action scenes that stimulate but don't innovate. Chan's hyper-adroitness is still a thrill to behold. *The Foreigner* is invigorated every time he's let loose, but then quickly retreats back to its status quo of dour, John le Carré-lite political intrigue.

It's a shame, because Chan's graying hair and lined face lend him extra gravitas that belies the still-explosive abilities he showcased in zanier classics like *Drunken Master* and *Rumble in the Bronx*. His superhuman kineticism and Quan's timely, tragic refugee story could have made for a potent and pointed action film—as opposed to merely being the best parts of a slightly better-than-average political thriller. **CP**

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POWER OUTAGE

Greek tragedy 'Electra' attempts to flow with the current



PAULA KELLER

BY JAY GABLER

Classical dramas are still relevant because they touch on universal themes: love, power, grief. There are also a lot of specifics, though, that take some translation for today's audiences. In Ten Thousand Things' production of Euripides' *Electra*, director/adaptor Rebecca Novick stumbles in an attempt to bridge ancient Greece and modern Minnesota.

Electra (Audrey Park) and her brother Orestes (Kurt Kwan) have ample reason to be peeved, as we learn via backstory quickly sketched by a three-woman chorus (Karen Wiese-Thompson, Thomasina Petrus, and Michelle Barber). Their father, Agamemnon, has been slain as the result of a plot by their mother, Clytemnestra (also Barber), and her lover, Aegisthus.

As the play opens, Orestes is returning from exile to exact vengeance. He enlists the willing help of his sister, who's laboring in an arranged and sexless marriage. (Electra's husband is a humble farmer, played by Mikell Sapp, who looks like he'd really like to be excluded from this narrative.)

What happens next? Let's just say there's a reason neo-Freudians refer to the "Electra complex."

Fundamentally, Novick's *Electra* is a meditation on revenge. It's hard to feel much sympathy for the sneering Aegisthus, whose end is described in vivid detail by Orestes' friend Pylades (Ricardo Vazquez), but killing one's own mother is quite another matter—particularly when, as Clytemnestra ultimately has the chance to explain, marriage to Agamemnon was no picnic. Should Electra have just embraced her faultless farmer and let go of the whole matricide plan?

Even the gods don't seem to be sure, which is part of the problem. These characters are embedded in a web of rules and relationships that the average theatergoer isn't going to be up on, and the stakes just aren't made clear enough in this quick 70-minute play. A freer adaptation, relocating the tragedy to a more familiar setting, might have streamlined the exposition and sharpened the focus on the characters' moral choices.

As is, with the characters intoning stoically like the heavily burdened archetypes they are, the more liberal aspects of this

ELECTRA

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adaptation feel jarringly incongruous. The chorus insert candid observations like they're in a daytime talk-show audience; a bag of Cheetos makes a random cameo; and a pair of late-arriving gods (Wiese-Thompson and Petrus) start hammering it up with goofy costumes and wacky mannerisms just as Electra and Orestes are meant to be facing the ultimate crisis of conscience.

This could be a train wreck in less capable hands, but fortunately Ten Thousand Things never skimps on talent. Park and Kwan both bring such desperate gravity to their roles that they're able to command the wild tonal swings this production requires.

The show's best moments are when the play's structure actually supports those performances—as when a maniacal Kwan enters bearing a grisly prop head (designed by Abbee Warmboe) that injects a sobering spectacle into the celebration of Aegisthus' death. At moments like that, this *Electra* draws current from the profound tension between abstract justice and messy reality. CP



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STREET Style

CHILL Settling into fall fashion at Unique MPLS on Saturday, October 14. **BY AMY GEE**



ATHENA PELTON

36, PHOTOGRAPHER

What are you wearing?

Pants and shoes from Cliché, top from local boutique, American Rag jacket.

Describe your style:

I like to look stylish while feeling like I'm wearing pajamas.

Current style crush?

Sarah Edwards.

What's a fall/winter trend you're excited for?

Denim, sweaters, and cozy socks.



ALEK TOMICH

25, ARCHITECT

What are you wearing?

Zara jeans, Clarks shoes, Paloma Wool sweatshirt from Hazel & Rose, Oak + Fort jacket, scarf by Scarf Shop.

Describe your style:

Simple and minimal, monochromatic, incorporating color when I can in small doses.

Current style crush?

Jaden Smith.

What's a fall/winter trend you're excited for?

Big coats and big scarves.



AARIKA MICHEL

31, VISUAL MERCHANDISING BUSINESS PARTNER

What are you wearing?

Zara boots, H&M overalls, top from Target, Topshop coat, Nasty Gal purse, vintage glasses.

Describe your style:

Eclectic urban, very minimalist, neutral.

Current style crush?

Sally LaPointe.

What's a fall/winter trend you're excited for?

Colored fur, moody florals, and khaki green.



KALISA MUEHLHAUSEN

39, VISUAL INNOVATION MANAGER AT TARGET

What are you wearing?

Sven clogs, self-made denim skirt, Uniqlo cardigan, tank from Nordstrom, Pendleton bandana.

Describe your style:

Comfortable. Japanese modern with pops to add color or texture.

Current style crush?

Rei Kawakubo.

What's a fall/winter trend you're excited for?

Apron dresses and knee-high socks with sneakers.

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9-11P - DJ TIIIIIIIIIP

SATURDAY - PET DAY!

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12-4P - DOG COSTUME
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- WINNERS ANNOUNCED AT 4 P.M.
7-9P - GOONIES THE MOVIE
9-11P - DJ TIIIIIIIIIP

SUNDAY

ALL DAY - PUMPKIN
PAINTING AND KIDS
TRICK-OR-TREATING

12-3P - KID HALLOWEEN
COSTUME CONTEST
- REGISTER KIDS FROM 12-3 P
- WINNERS ANNOUNCED AT 4P
12-4P - GLITTER HAIR &
FACE PAINTING
12-4P - PONY RIDES
8-10P - DJ TIIIIIIIIIP

MONDAY

7-9P - TRIVIA MAFIA:
HALLOWEEN TRIVIA

TUESDAY

ALL DAY - ADULT COSTUME
CONTEST
- WINNER ANNOUNCED AT 10P
4-8P - FACE PAINTING
6P - SHUTTLE TO XCEL
7P - HOME WILD GAME
7-9P - HALLOWEEN THE MOVIE

THE SECOND COMING

With two new EPs on the horizon, rap veteran Muja Messiah is grinding harder than ever



BY MICHAEL MADDEN

Muja Messiah's rap career began when—well, actually, the veteran Minneapolis rapper has a couple different answers to that question.

His crew Raw Villa came on the scene way back in 2000, and while sitting down with me at his St. Paul studio space, Muja says that if he finds himself arguing with a younger rapper, "I might be like, 'Young buck, shut up—I've been doing this for 20 years.'" Really, though, he says he didn't properly start pursuing his music career until around the time of his 2014 album, *God Kissed It, the Devil Missed It*, which features what still might be his most essential song, "Northside Nightmares."

"That's where I had a plan of attack," Muja says. "I had a focus. I had a team around me. Prior to then, it was just, 'Let me go in, look at my notebook, and spit a verse over the beat.'"

Now 40, Muja is working as hard as ever and, with a pair of new EPs coming out

soon, produced by New York indie-rap heavyweight Roc Marciano—*Saran Rap* and *MPLS Massacre Vol. 2*—he's making some of the best music of his career. Over the years, Muja has developed a style that distinguishes him from many of his Minneapolis peers, especially introspective rhymers like Slug and conscious MCs like Brother Ali. Muja's songs tend to be street-oriented and focused on all manner of hustling, but he's also incisive about race and politics—and wickedly funny too.

The styles of rap in the Twin Cities that get the most attention, especially on a national level, are rarely the traditional street rhymes that emerge from other regional scenes, and Muja has some thoughts on the matter. "I believe that Minnesota, on a national level, it's definitely whitewashed," he says. "People look at Minnesota as the white place. They think Brother Ali is black, they think Slug is white. There is an underlayer of whitewashing, but not just in Minnesota—in hip-hop as a whole. There's a reason certain artists are pushed to the forefront,

whether it's Post Malone, whether it's Cardi B, whatever it is."

Muja says he isn't specifically intending to change that national perception, but the new EPs should significantly add to his impact and influence, especially within the Twin Cities. That's partly due to the beats from Roc, who first came to the attention of avid hip-hop fans as a member of Flipmode Squad, then built a cult following as a solo artist around the time of 2010's *Marchberg*. Muja has nothing but love and admiration for Roc. "I meet a lot of rap dudes, and they can disappoint you with how they act," he says. "Some dudes, not even on Roc's level, will have an attitude or have a persona that they think they gotta maintain, where they're just complete dickheads. Roc was a standup dude."

Saran Rap and *MPLS Massacre Vol. 2* are the latest examples of Muja's preference for working with one producer per project. In the past, he's also done records with Minneapolis producers Tek (who handled 10 of the 12 songs on this year's *PyrExpeditioN*) and Mike the Martyr (who

produced 2015's *Angel Blood Soup*). "I like harnessing one person's ear," Muja says. "Usually, working with one person does the trick for me."

The approach did the trick for both the new EPs. On top of Roc's beats, Muja is as smart, evocative, and funny as ever. As for guest vocalists on the projects, *Saran Rap* boasts verses from indie-rap mainstays including Roc, Detroit's Guilty Simpson, and California's Oh No, while *MPLS Massacre Vol. 2* features Muja's son Nazeem and Spencer Joles on different songs.

Muja and Roc recorded *Saran Rap* in Minneapolis a year ago, with a fresh batch of beats, but *MPLS Massacre Vol. 2*, which uses previously released Roc instrumentals, came together in just the past few weeks. "A lot of shit has happened in the world since [*Saran Rap* was recorded]," Muja says. "A lot of shit has happened within my life since then. I gotta talk about that shit; it's my therapy. There's a lot going on—the hurricanes, the orange guy, everything. I just got married in Puerto Rico, and the place I got married ain't even there anymore. A lot of stuff going on in the world right now I'm emotionally connected to more than ever, and a lot of people are."

Aside from his own music, Muja is also excited about the music careers of his wife, Maria Isa, and his son, Nazeem. The rapidly rising rap duo of Nazeem and Joles is set to release a new album called *Years of Obscurity*, and Muja says Isa, who also has an upcoming album, is making the best music of her life.

Muja is relishing it all, and he's also taking pride in his longevity. "What I hear all the time from my peers is, 'Man, you're still doing it,'" he says. "I see a lot of guilt in the eyes of some artists who was doing it and ain't doing it no more. Or I see young dudes who see me and they're like, 'Man, if he's still doing it, I gotta get on my shit.' So I'm motivating the young and the older to just get on your art. Do something that takes your mind off of things so you don't go crazy."

Muja is not only still doing it—he's doing it well. And there's no false humility when he acknowledges his recent consistency. "It's like Vince Carter, man—why he gotta retire if he still got a 40-inch vertical?" **TP**

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Girlpool immediately made headway in today's indie-rock landscape by doing a lot with a little. The Los Angeles duo of BFFs Cleo Tucker and Harmony Tividia first emerged with a self-titled 2014 EP and 2015 debut album, *Before the World Was Big*, powered only by guitar, bass, the two members' harmonizing voices, and a chemistry that can only be harnessed by musicians who are also day-one friends. Despite the modest simplicity of their recipe, it was effective enough to land them on the cover of *The Fader* in late 2016. Then, this spring, the band's sophomore statement delivered on the hype. While *Powerplant* is consistently grungy and punchy, Girlpool also stretch out on the 28-minute collection, incorporating blooming shoegaze and playful twee-pop. What this duo lacks in pure originality they make up for with their developing songcraft and confidence. With Palm and Lala Lala. 18+. 8 p.m. \$20. 629 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-333-7399. —MICHAEL MADDEN

THIS IS THE KIT

TURF CLUB, THURSDAY 10.19

Fulcrum of the alt-folk group This Is the Kit, the Bristol, U.K.-raised, long-time Paris-based Kate Stables draws inspiration, she's said, from "oracles, memory, language, secrets, superstition, lives out of sync," along with science fiction, folk tales, and nursery rhymes. And plenty more, including children's games and songs, the impulse behind "Moonshine Freeze," the title cut from TITK's fourth album, which offers musings about fundamental life forces. The music also is deceptively complex, morphing from a sparse, ethereal evocation of Led Zeppelin's "Ramble On" intro to a horn-etched blast of Afrobeat. Stables' quiet, mesmerizing voice, harboring chilly angles, is peppered with ghostly echoes. More spirits challenge sanity in "Hotter Colder," ostensibly about swimming along the Dorset coast, but with an ominous undercurrent and explosive chorus that suggests far more. Rogue Valley opens. 21+. \$15. 7 p.m. 1601 University Ave., St. Paul; 651-647-0486. —RICK MASON

TROMBONE SHORTY & ORLEANS AVENUE

PALACE THEATRE, FRIDAY 10.20

Charismatic New Orleans bandleader, brass musician, vocalist, and songwriter Troy Andrews still goes by the name acquired when he was dwarfed by his 'bone and too young for school. Now tall and equally adept on the trumpet, Trombone Shorty and his band charge through performances that fall somewhere between a second line parade, a street party, and a James Brown soul revue. The writhing mix of NOLA roots, rock, R&B, soul, jazz, and hip-hop was electrifying on his first two Verve albums. The third was partially marred by a retreat to anonymous contemporary R&B, but the new *Parking Lot Symphony* is a notable correction. Framed by jazz-inflected variations on a Louis Gottschalk-like dirge, the album has sparkling covers of the Meters' funky "It Ain't No Use" (with Meters guitarist Leo Nocentelli sitting in) and Allen Toussaint's Ernie K-Doe vehicle "Here Come the Girls." Rootsy

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- 10.27** 90s HALLOWEEN BASH
- 11.3** MARK MALLMAN, KID DAKOTA
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rock'n'soul band Vintage Trouble opens. 18+. 8:30 p.m. \$37-\$79.50. 17 W. Seventh Pl., St. Paul; 651-502-2259. —RICK MASON

JONWAYNE

7TH ST. ENTRY, FRIDAY 10.20

Los Angeles' Jonwayne gets it: He doesn't "look like a rapper," a notion that serves as the premise for a skit on his latest LP, *Rap Album Two*. But even if this burly, bearded longhair really looks like the drummer of a doom-metal band, he's well on his way to becoming a mainstay rapper/producer in hip-hop's underground anyway. After initially making a name for himself with instrumental albums and performances at the weekly L.A. beat showcase Low End Theory, Jon began to take rapping seriously too, and his abilities as an MC were seemingly fully formed by the time he released 2013's *Rap Album One*. The anxious, introspective *Rap Album Two*, though, is a purposeful leap forward, as Jon grapples with his indie fame, alcoholism, and a certain pessimism that feels unique to 2017. Jon's writing these days may recall someone like God Loves Ugly-era Slug, but his music is ultimately too personal for him to be mistaken for anyone else. With Danny Watts, DJ EMV, and Christopher Michael Jensen. 18+. 8 p.m. \$12-\$14. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. —MICHAEL MADDEN

JULIEN BAKER

CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER,
SATURDAY 10.21

On her first album, 2015's *Sprained Ankle*, Memphis indie-folk singer-songwriter Julien Baker quickly secured a large fan base with quietly heartbreaking songs like "Everybody Does" and "Something." Baker made the album while attending Middle Tennessee State University, then

was compelled to drop out, a decision she's unlikely to regret anytime soon. Based on the strength of its advance singles—the powerful ballad "Appointments" and the stately, sweeping title track—her sophomore album, *Turn Out the Lights*, which arrives next Friday, could easily be one of the fall's finest singer-songwriter LPs. This show follows Baker's appearance on *A Prairie Home Companion* earlier this month, during which she performed two new original songs and a rendition of the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul." With Half Waif. 8 p.m. \$18-\$20. 416 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-338-2674. —MICHAEL MADDEN

IRMA THOMAS/BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA/PRESERVATION HALL LEGACY QUINTET

GUTHRIE THEATER, MONDAY 10.23
Irma Thomas, the inimitable Soul Queen of New Orleans, has a marvelous voice veined with blues, soul, gospel, and Crescent City elixir. She's renowned for her emotionally generous performances, whether she's dusting off nuggets like "Ruler of My Heart" and "Time Is on My Side," setting her backfield in motion to "Iko Iko," or soaring heavenward in gospel. The Blind Boys, a gospel institution going on eight decades, still features original members Jimmy Carter and Clarence Fountain, and their vocal harmonies remain rich and thrilling even as they've expanded from spirituals to more secular material in recent years. While the Preservation Hall Jazz Band has ventured beyond orthodoxy lately, the Legacy Quintet, featuring longtime Hall vets, sticks to traditional New Orleans jazz. The promise of unprecedented collaborations makes this show unique. 7:30 p.m. \$35-\$65. 818 S. Second St., Minneapolis; 612-377-2224. —RICK MASON

Parental Controls

My teen covets women's underwear



Dan Savage

My only child is 16 years old. He was curious about sex from a very young age and very open with me, which gave me ample opportunity to talk with him about safety and consent. He went through a cross-dressing phase when he was small—mostly wanting to wear nail polish and try on mascara—and I felt like I navigated those waters pretty well, but his father made attempts to squelch those impulses. (He and I are divorced. He has since remarried and is less involved.) That's the background. I've always accepted that he is who he is and done my best to help guide and educate him.

Then last year, I caught him trying to shoplift a pair of panties. I'm not the sort of mom who freaks out, but I made him put them back and talked to him about his actions. When I asked him why he stole them, he refused to tell me. I asked: "Did you want them to masturbate with? Did you want to wear them?" He said he wanted to try them on. I told him that if he wanted to explore, he needed to do that with a legal purchase and in the privacy of his own room. Today, I found a girl's bra in the laundry. He says he doesn't know whose it is or how it got there, but this isn't my first rodeo. What on earth do I do? If I send him to a therapist and this is about being trans or cross-dressing tendencies, I'm afraid that will shame him. However, this is now something of a criminal/ethical concern, and I want to nip that in the bud. He is in every way a wonderful human: kind, smart, funny, athletic, no drugs. Is this just the same kid who has always been curious about sex? Or are these warning signs of some sort of sexual deviance? Please help.

MOM IN SLEEPY SOUTH CAROLINA LOVINGLY EDUCATES OFFSPRING

Take a deep breath, MISSCLEO, or take two—take however many you need until you're back in touch with your inner mom, the one who doesn't freak out.

Your son may be a cross-dresser or he may be trans or he may find bras and panties titillating because women wear them and he wants to sleep with women (not be one). (Lots of gay boys are titil-

lated by jockstraps—but a closeted gay boy can collect 'em all without freaking out his mom.) We can't know whether your son is a cross-dresser, trans, or merely titillated, MISSCLEO, but he's clearly exploring and wants to do so privately. He knows you've always accepted him for who he is (but a reminder never hurts), so if this is about his gender identity, well, you'll have to trust that he'll share that with you when he's ready. But if this is about a kink, he may never share that info with you, because why on earth would he? Kinks are for sharing with lovers, not mothers.

Give your son some space, including the space to make his own mistakes. As teenage misbehavior goes, swiping a single pair of panties isn't exactly a crime spree. If you suspect he snuck into the girls' locker room and made off with a bra, you'll want to address that with him—not the "Why do you want a bra?" part, but the risk of getting caught, suspended, expelled, or worse. There are too many prosecutors out there looking for excuses to slap the "sex offender" label on teenagers—especially in the Bible Belt.

My hunch is you don't have a sex offender on your hands or a kid drifting into organized crime. You have a slightly pervy teenage boy who's curious about sex and who may, like millions of other men, have a thing for women's undergarments. You should emphasize the Not Okay-ness of shoplifting panties from stores or stealing bras from classmates and the possible consequences should he get caught, but otherwise, MISSCLEO, I'm going to advise you to back the fuck off. Your son knows you love him, he knows he can talk to you, and he'll confide in you when he's ready—if, again, this is something he needs to discuss with you at all.

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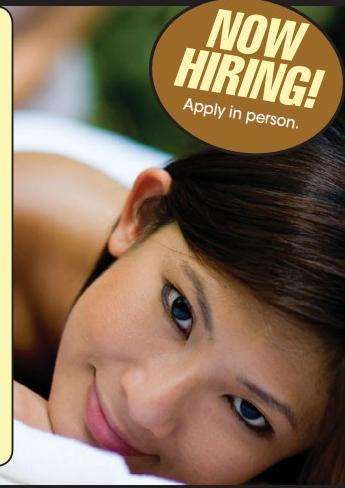
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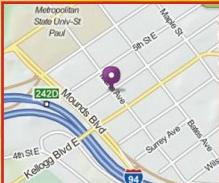


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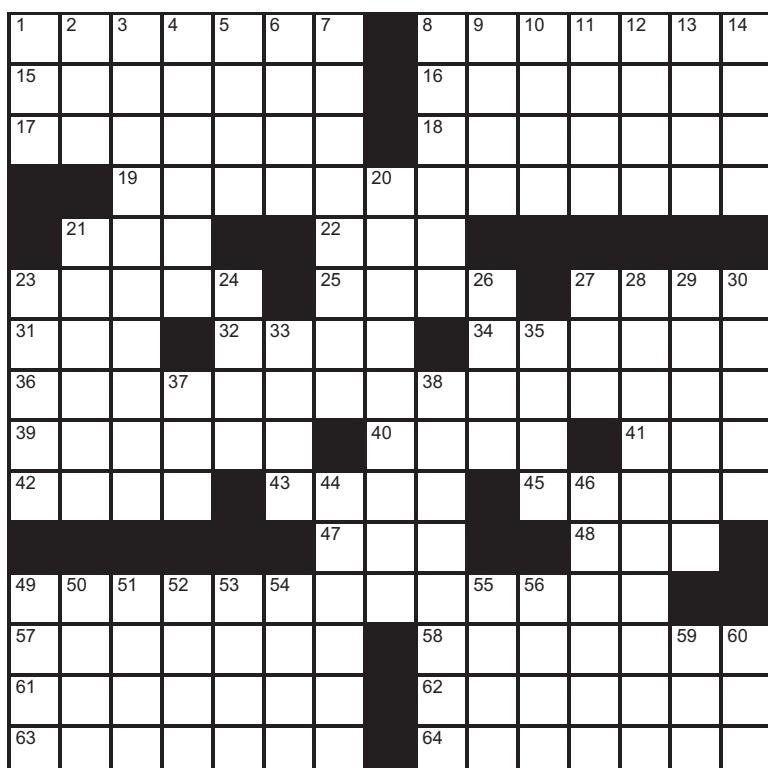
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